

The Cleveland
Museum of Art
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The Triumph
of Japanese
Style
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REFLECTIONS OF JAPANESE STYLE AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

September 3, 1991 to January 5, 1992; Gallery 102

To complement its 75th anniversary exhibition *The Triumph of Japanese Style: 16th Century Art in Japan*, The Cleveland Museum of Art presents *Reflections of Japanese Style*, a selection of European and American works greatly influenced by the aesthetic traditions represented in the Japanese show. It was not until after Commodore Matthew C. Perry's 1853 expedition that trade between Japan and the West began to allow the free flow of culture, but once the doors were opened, the effect in the West of the Japanese decorative style was almost immediate. During the late 1800s and into this century, European and American artisans and artists working in nearly every medium adopted elements of Japanese style for use in their own creations.

This exhibition presents works representative of what the French called *Japonisme*, a style whose influence can be found in objects ranging from a silver coffee set by Tiffany & Co., studio ceramics from France, and Bugatti furniture from Italy, to prints by Toulouse-Lautrec and Whistler. Of particular interest to printmakers, as one example, was the Japanese use of planar (as opposed to linear) composition, which resulted in broad, flat areas of color. Traditional European woodcut and lithography techniques in contrast had generally imitated metal engraving and etching in the use of fine lines to create shadings and imply perspective. By the late 19th century, the Japanese-inspired approach had become very common in many forms of printmaking, while the subject matter more often than not remained essentially Western. Works in other media show similar incorporations of Japanese techniques and aesthetic concerns into Western art. Drawn from the Museum's collection and from those of a few private individuals, these works of art offer opportunities for insight into the ways a completely foreign aesthetic can be adapted and reinvented in an entirely new context. *Reflections of Japanese Style* was organized by Henry Hawley, chief curator of later Western art.